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11-21-1956

Letter, 1956 November 21, [Fritz Marti] to Father Ryan

Fritz Marti

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November 21, 1956

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Carl J. Ryan,
Superintendent of Schools,
The Archdiocese of Cincinnati,
5418 Moeller Avenue, Norwood,
Cincinnati 12, Ohio.

Dear Father Ryan:

Here, in short, is my opinion about certification of teachers in private schools. The sketch of a concrete case best illustrates my point.

Our preparatory school covers twelve years. We take only pupils of good average ability or better. We cannot take care of children with serious difficulties. We administer nationally used achievement tests. We form small study groups of pupils of about the same ability and achievement in the given subject, regardless of age. The size of these groups runs from two to ten pupils. We see to it that each pupil covers at least the ground required at his age level in public schools. We do not have classes resting on the criterion of age alone.

This system requires very versatile teachers. It is my policy to require two languages beside English, the ability to help pupils in mathematics at least through junior highschool, a fair acquaintance with world history, a grasp of the fundamentals of science, a strong personality, and the demonstration of teaching ability. I have no use for mere specialists, e.g. language teachers who cannot help in mathematics if necessary. To be sure I want teachers who are well at home in one academic field.

The case of Mrs. Doris Streng Jackson is illustrative. She is twentythree, from Strasbourg in Alsace, married to a young geologist from Chicago. She has her bachelor from the Lycée Hélène Boucher in Paris, her "licence ès sciences politiques" from the Sorbonne, and - more for spot, since the Licence from the Sorbonne amounts to more than an M.A. - last year she made her A.B. at Antioch College. She speaks French, German, Spanish (and teaches all three with us), Polish and Creole; she can teach Latin and Greek; she reads Russian. With us she teaches history, geography, physical education, and sewing, and she helps out in arithmetic. She is an excellent teacher.

Were I forced to insist that she go back to college and take a number of courses in education, I am sure she would seek an eastern school unhampered by such requirements. I do not imply that courses in education offer nothing at all. I have taught such courses, at Hollins College, and at the University of Maryland. But I do hold that the content of such courses can very well be absorbed from the better kind of books on the subject, while on the job. And I do believe that credit obtained for such courses is no proof that the content has been truly absorbed. I hope the private schools of Ohio will not be saddled with a requirement which lessens their efficiency.

Sincerely,